

MAJOR GENERAL

JEFFREY L. GIDLEY

The Commanding General of the California Army National Guard's 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized) talks about mobilizations and other preparations for possible conflict.

He's flown helicopters in Vietnam and served as a Medical Logistics Battalion Commander in Desert Storm. One year ago, this 55-year-old veteran of two wars became the 26th Commanding General of the California Army National Guard's 40th Infantry Division. Since that time, Major General Jeffrey L. Gidley's leadership as a division commander has been a baptism under fire, as several units of the 40th Division have been mobilized and deployed, at home and abroad, as part of one of the California National Guard's largest mobilization in over 50 years.

Major Stan Zezotarski's interview with Major General Gidley began by discussing the 40th Division's preparation for possible future conflict.

GRIZZLY: The 40th Infantry Division received a new wartime mission in 2001, that being Korea. With all the recent activity in Korea, will the Division focus its potential duty in the Pacific? Or will it prepare for possible

conflict in two theaters?

GIDLEY: The Division is historically focused on the Pacific Rim. I wouldn't say that we have a specific wartime mission for any particular theater. Our training is based on a training program that will prepare us for conflict in any theater that we would be assigned. We focus on individual, platoon, and company level training that is preparing soldiers to be successful, no matter where they are assigned.

GRIZZLY: Is the Division still involved with Division Teaming?

GIDLEY: We have a team relationship with the second Infantry Division in Korea, however, we are not as strongly teamed as we used to be when we were teamed with the 4th Infantry Division.

GRIZZLY: How is the compatibility of the Division's equipment with their Active Duty Counterparts?

GIDLEY: As far as major combat systems, with the exception of artillery, the 40th

Division is as modern as any Guard Division. We are in the process of modernizing our communication system, which will improve our compatibility with active duty counterparts. We expect that to be completed over the next couple of years.

GRIZZLY: The Division has an armor battalion on alert that could deploy as part of the Washington National Guard's 81st Armor Brigade. Do you anticipate any criticism about the National Guard combat units' capability and readiness for combat similar to that in Desert Shield when the Army questioned whether National Guard combat units were ready to deploy as part of its round out brigades?

GIDLEY: No, I don't anticipate any legitimate criticism. The 1st of the 185th has met all of its training goals prior to deployment. Anyone that is aware of pre-mobilization training requirements can clearly see that the 185th is well prepared.

GRIZZLY: You currently have several combat and combat support units deployed around



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PHOTOS BY SFC ROBERT PACK



**Major General
Jeffrey L. Gidley,
Commanding
General of the
40th Infantry
Division,
addresses his
troops at the
Joint Forces
Training Base,
Los Alamitos.**

PHOTO BY MSG JIM OBER

the country providing security at facilities vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Has this homeland security mission diluted or enhanced these units' combat readiness?

GIDLEY: Contrary to some people's opinion when we first began, we've actually been able to continually improve individual training readiness. In some instances, we've improved collective training. So, we are very pleased. Plus, through the Soldier Readiness Preparation process, we've been able to improve personnel readiness of those battalions that have mobilized.

GRIZZLY: With your combat experience, is it possible that you, yourself, will be activated?

GIDLEY: Entire National Guard Divisions have been activated in the past during World War I, World War II, and Korea. It's possible that we could be activated and assigned active duty soldiers. I don't think that there is a high likelihood that will happen, but it's certainly possible.

GRIZZLY: But you're prepared for anything?

GIDLEY: Absolutely! It's my job to prepare soldiers and it's my job to prepare myself.

GRIZZLY: With all the deployments that you are having now, it's obviously created a huge demand for family support and employer support to the Guard and Reserve. How has the Division coped with this increased demand.

GIDLEY: We're really proud of our family support personnel and all of our volunteers. It amazes me everyday how deeply committed they are to the success of family

support and the success of the Employer Support to the Guard and Reserve program. They actively participate in every mobilization and deployment. Without them we wouldn't be as successful. Based on my personal experiences in the Gulf War, as a battalion commander, I can tell you that without the family support volunteers, our ability to succeed would have been significantly impacted. I have seen the exact same enthusiasm, support, and success in supporting our deployed soldiers in every family support group of deploying units.

GRIZZLY: Can you give an example of any family support programs you have planned for the future?

GIDLEY: One of the things that we are doing now in the Division is developing a Youth Camp this August. We're trying to provide opportunities for teenagers whose parents are part of the National Guard. We're organizing activities that will help them relate to other teens who have similar situations. We're really excited about this program. Colonel John Harrel and his wife, Colonel Linda Harrel, are sponsoring this program. We're looking forward to it.

GRIZZLY: You have served in two wars; Vietnam and the Persian Gulf. What advice do you have for your soldiers, as well as for all members of the California National Guard, about preparing for potential hostilities?

GIDLEY: The advice I would give people is to be prepared for the possibility of

deployment and make sure that your family is prepared for the fact that you might be mobilized and deployed at some point. The hardest part of the transition between the Guard world and the active duty world is not for the soldier. It's for the family. The family loses a member of its group and the soldier's family contributions must be picked up by someone else. So it's important for the soldier to ensure that the family understands financial issues, maintenance issues, and other things that the soldier might have done but will no longer be doing while mobilized.

GRIZZLY: What advice do you have for soldiers who are actually mobilizing?

GIDLEY: The best thing I can say is to be confident in your training and in your fellow soldiers. You're not alone. Every deploying soldier thinks of himself or herself as an individual. The one consistent theme, however, is the relationship of the entire organization as a team, as opposed to individual concerns. The caring and confidence that you have for each other carries you through.

GRIZZLY: What life-style changes should soldiers make when alerted?

GIDLEY: For soldiers being alerted, please don't start making any life-style changes before you actually get the mobilization orders. In the past, soldiers have decided to quit jobs, buy cars, get married, and do things based on an alert notification. Some mobilization orders happen very quickly, some don't happen for a period of time. Some may not happen at all. My advice is don't do anything different than you would have done if you were not going to be mobilized—or at least wait until you see mobilization orders, before making any changes.

GRIZZLY: The Grizzly is distributed to families, civilian employers, elected leaders and even to some news services. What would you like to say to them?

GIDLEY: We in the National Guard are very proud of belonging to this great organization. We take pride in the fact that we serve our country, state, and local community. We know that without the support of our families, our employers, the citizens of this state, and our elected officials, everything that we hope to accomplish – everything that we take pride in – would simply not be done. We could not do what we do without the continued, loyal support of all of our Guard family. We appreciate the significant sacrifices you make to ensure that we will be available and ready to do our duty. 🐾